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ATG Annual Survey Report

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boom of just a few years before came flooding back to us. We weren't sure how it might work, but visions of quick wealth — less than two years after starting the company — danced in our heads. Three of us went to the corporate headquarters, where they put us up in the nicest hotel in town, took us out for a fancy dinner, and we met with representatives from all parts of the company. They gave us the grand tour, and showed us server rooms and computer resources we could only dream about. It was a heady and valuable experience for us, but in the end, we decided that acquisition wasn't in our best interest or those of our clients, at least not at that time. We aim high: we have goals that seem unreasonable to a reasonable businessperson, so no reasonable businessperson would pay us what we think we're worth. Since we plan to meet the goals we set, and don't know any better, we're not sufficiently scared of our unreasonable goals, and we know we're worth an unreasonable amount of money.

We like to say that we're a company founded by a librarian, for librarians. Of course, a librarian does not a company make. I didn't do this by myself: without the technology department, led by my youngest brother, **Mike**, we'd have nothing to sell. Without the fantastic and dedicated sales force, led by our high school friend, **Chris**, we wouldn't have the money to invest in re-


search and development. Without the critical customer support that **Tim** and his staff provide — and they are the true face of the company for all of our clients — we wouldn't know if we were doing things right or not, and we couldn't be sure that libraries were implementing our products in the most effective way. Without business guidance from my other brother, **Steve**, we wouldn't have office space (literally: for the first year, we worked out of his basement), we'd probably be in trouble with the IRS, and we'd have a much harder time defining what our goals are and how we're going to achieve them.

But there are aspects that are influenced by my background in libraries. I was always frustrated, for example, when I'd call to ask about the price of a product — even a standard print resource — and the representative would say he'd get back to me in a few days. I knew they went back to figure out how much money they could get out of us; I could almost hear them saying, "Oh, that's an **ARL** library — bump up the price a bit more." And my frustration with airline pricing, as much as anything, made it clear to me that everyone would prefer that we use simple, straightforward pricing, based on the work we would do for a client, not the size of their budget, the size of their student body, or any other irrelevant measure.

We also try to put as much information as possible on our Web pages. While we know that it tells competitors more than we would like — it is a competitive marketplace — we also know

that librarians want to start with as much information as they can. They want to do research, and they're not afraid to read a lot of text. We think it is important to present information the way librarians want to receive it, and I think we know that better than our competitors.

One thing that I've learned as a vendor, and that I'd pass on to librarians, is the importance of knowing and working with vendors. It is *not* all about the price, regardless of what the state purchasing guidelines might suggest. What is the cost of working with an unresponsive vendor? Librarians need to demand better customer service from their vendors, and I think that there's a tendency to accept mediocrity. When you have a choice of vendors, you need to use it: if you don't, you very well may lose it. When we must, we pay more for better customer service, because we know what poor service and poor products cost us. That's why we now only buy **Dell** computers, and no longer buy much cheaper **eMachines**.

I don't quite know where my experience with **Serials Solutions** will lead me. Perhaps, at some point, I'll return to working in a library. I certainly know the pleasure it brings, and I feel like I can make a difference there. But at the same time, I feel like our entire company is making a difference in libraries, and perhaps working on the entrepreneurial side of the equation allows me to make a bigger difference in librarianship than if I were in a library all day long. Either way, life is about experiences, and the experience from this side of the exhibit floor is pretty interesting. 

ATG Annual Survey Report

by **Michael Litchfield** (College of Charleston) <libconf@cofc.edu>

It's time once again for the **ATG Annual Survey Report**. The surveys are all tallied up, and with considerably more returns than last year, the results certainly indicate some strong patterns. First, librarians were asked to express some concerns, and the answers are pretty similar to concerns over the past few years.

Major concerns are the rampant merging going on among publishers and vendors, with more than one respondent specifically worried about the **divine/Faxon** mess. This time around, however, no one mentioned a certain publisher with a penchant for acquisitions (at least not by name). Other concerns included budgets in free-fall while prices soar, the increasing need to keep the same information in multiple formats, and the struggle to keep up with rapidly evolving technologies. Other fairly ubiquitous concerns were increasingly restrictive copyright laws and license agreements. Respondents were also concerned about archiving: how to archive electronic resources, where to find the space to archive,



and how to adapt electronic archives to new technologies.

Then there was the age factor: most respondents were concerned about the decline in numbers of librarians, the decline in positions for librarians, and increasing age of the profession. The last concern is certainly a valid one: when asked how long they had been librarians, the average response was 19 years, 4 months; however, only 10 respondents had been librarians for 10 years or less. A further 10 had between 10 and 19 years experience,

while 29 had 19 years experience or more, with several respondents having over 30 years in librarianship, indicating that not only is the profession aging, it's rapidly aging.

eBooks

One of the first questions we always ask in the survey is whether or not the respondents have ever purchased eBooks, and if so, what kind of budget they had for this resource. Nearly three quarters of our respondents have purchased eBooks (36 had, 13 had not), but

most reported that they did not have a budget breakdown; most purchased eBooks through netLibrary and consortia. Of the respondents who did report spending on eBooks, the figures went to one extreme or the other: two respondents reported \$50,000 budgets, while two others reported \$5,000 budgets.

Outsourcing

Everybody's doing it. Most outsourced; approval plans (which I suppose is somewhat redundant) and cataloging. Respondents also reported outsourcing binding, processing, and databases. Only four respondents, or 8%, reported outsourcing their acquisitions.

Downsizing

Not quite everybody's doing it. About one quarter of our respondents, 13 out of 49, said that they have been downsized in the past year. This percentage has held firm over the past three years, and while not enough for a quorum, it is still a fairly high number. The largest amount of downsizing has occurred, not surprisingly, among the ranks of professional librarians, with paraprofessionals coming in a close second.

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Some libraries are relying more on paraprofessionals and part-time help to shoulder the load left by departing librarians, while others are merging departments and crossing various roles. When asked what effects the downsizing has had, results were fairly evenly split. Some respondents reported negative effects, some reported positive, some said it was just too soon to tell. There were also mixed responses: while the reduced staff has led to a larger workload and more stress, it has not been all bad.

We also asked how respondents have shouldered the load. An overwhelming majority said they simply grin and bear it. Respondents are trying to work more efficiently, shifting work to non-peak times, and redefining their roles and services. About a quarter are focusing on teaching the end user how to use available resources. Only a very few respondents report turning customers away, but also report that they serve small customer bases anyway, and have focused on only serving their customer base rather than the populace at large.

Budgets

Budgets were fairly evenly split among respondents. 23 actually reported increased materials budgets, against 18 who reported declining budgets, while 8 reported stagnant budgets. The 23 respondents with increased budgets often included the caveat that increase hasn't kept up with inflation. On average, the budgetary increase was 9.67%, while the decrease was 9.15%. These results were on par with past survey results, except that the average budgetary decrease improved ever so slightly.

The hardest hit area of the materials budgets was, not surprisingly, books. Two thirds of respondents reported stagnant or decreasing book budgets, with an average decrease of 14.71%. Among those with falling book budgets, most respondents reported that they were robbing Peter to pay Paul, in the form of electronic resources, investments in technology, and the skyrocketing world of STM journals. In addition, among respondents who reported climbing book budgets, the increase was only 8.1%, the smallest increase in any subcategory.

The numbers for journals budgets were the opposite. 55% of our respondents reported rising journals budgets to the average tune of 9.13%. Less than a third of our respondents reported falling journals budgets, with an average decline of 10.18%. Six respondents out of 49 reported stagnant journals budgets.

Electronic resources represented the biggest change in budgets this year, just as they have for the past few years. 65% of respondents reported rising budgets, with a 13.76% average increase, while some spiked as high as 50%. Only 4 respondents reported declining budgets, which averaged 11.5%. 13 respondents had stagnant budgets for electronic resources.

We next asked respondents to break down how their budgets were allocated. A shade less than 25% went to books, and a shade more than 50% went to journals. Compared with data from

the last two years, books are definitely loosening ground, while journals are gaining a larger and larger share of the budget. Electronic journals and online resources are holding steady at about 19%, CD-ROMs are holding steady at about 1%, and other expenditures, including binding, microfilm and -fiche, and AV hold steady at about 5%.

Internet Use

88% of our respondents reported having a homepage. When asked how libraries used the Internet, respondents gave fairly consistent answers: ordering, claiming, searching B.I.P. and hunting for O.P. titles, and searching publishers' and vendors' Websites. A few respondents said "We use the Internet for virtually everything." Perhaps from now on we should ask for what tasks don't librarians use the Internet?

Document Delivery and ILL

We asked whether or not librarians used commercial document delivery, and responses were mixed: 45% do, 55% don't. We also asked how much or what percentage of library budgets was allocated to document delivery. While all respondents who gave percentages reported small numbers (an average of .47%), and most respondents who gave a dollar amount reported small sums, there were one or two very high dollar amounts that skewed the average dollar amount up to \$35,000.

Next we asked how effective respondents' ILL was, and we got 28 respondents who said their ILL service was very effective, with 4 who said it was not very effective. There were an additional 17 who said their ILL service was simply adequate. Only 8 respondents used paper-view, and of those 8, 6 reported very effective service. Most respondents do not use paper-view, however, most often because patrons are unwilling to foot the bill.

A large majority of respondents, 82%, reported that they use document delivery/ILL statistics in their collection purchasing decisions. However, there were a few who reported that, even though their document delivery/ILL service was not effective, they still used statistics in their purchasing decisions.

88% of respondents keep use statistics. While this seems like a high number, most of the respondents who fall within this 88% report that, while they keep use statistics, they are unable to analyze these statistics. Either the statistics are too unstandardized to be of any real use, results are hard to interpret, or libraries simply don't have the staff to thoroughly analyze use statistics.

Training

When asked if libraries provided training for Library Technical Assistants, a reassuring 94% said yes. Those who said no were quick to say that they had no LTAs. Everyone who reported providing training for LTAs cited in-house training by existing staff as the main method. Funding travel to conferences and workshops was second, with 72% of respondents listing this as a training method. In-house continuing education and funding of credit courses were tied as the third method of training, with 48% each. Satellite transmissions were the least popular way to train LTAs, netting 33%.

Purchasing and Archiving

Given the difference in cost between paperback and hardcover, we asked libraries if they had implemented paperback-only approval plans, or if they had approval plans at all. 20 respondents did not have approval plans, 19 did have approval plans but have not implemented paperback-only purchasing, and 10 have implemented paperback-only approval plans.

We also asked about firm orders, and 14 respondents said that they are only ordering paperback books. While that leaves 35 who have not gone to paperback only firm orders yet, the number is somewhat deceiving. Most said that if the price difference was more than \$20, they would order the paperback edition, and several said they are seriously considering the paperback-only option.

The last purchasing question we asked regarded print versus electronic journals. 32 respondents, 65%, have cancelled print in favor of electronic. The average dollar amount cancelled was \$114,429, with individual answers varying from \$5,000 to \$500,000. Archives are a concern, and some respondents said they only cancelled print when the publisher granted archival rights.

Speaking of archives: how do librarians intend to archive electronic information? Five answered that they will let some other library worry about this. In their defense, however, they make clear that they are small libraries with a specialized patron base and they do not need to concern themselves, in general, with archiving issues facing large libraries with diverse collections and equally diverse patrons. Eight respondents intend to keep electronic information in whatever format they acquire it. 12 will keep paper archives for the present. Many respondents are looking to databases such as **JSTOR** and **Project Muse** for archiving. A few are hoping that projects such as **LOCKSS** will succeed in maintaining the necessary archives.

Distance Education and Computer Centers


32 (65%) respondents provide distance education, ranging from local services to statewide services to interstate and nationwide services. Most libraries associated with schools that offer distance education support the service with remote access to the library's collections, including full-text journals, virtual reference, and document delivery. Some librarians reported that they have extensions located off the main campus to assist in distance education.

We also asked respondents if they were merged with their institutions' computer centers. Only five respondents, about 10%, have merged. This figure is actually considerably lower than in the past: over the past few years, responses ranged from 15-20%.

Where Do You Work, What Do You Read?




Finally, we asked where librarians worked and what publications they read. Four respondents worked in special libraries, 37 worked in academic libraries (including law libraries and medical libraries), two worked in government

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libraries, and six reported themselves as technical services librarians.

Aside from *Against the Grain*, our respondents read *Library Journal* (69%) and *C&RL* (57%) in large numbers. *Choice* is third (35%), followed by *Publishers Weekly* (29%) and *Information Technology in Libraries* (20%). Other popular publications include *American Libraries*, *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, *LRTS*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Computers in Libraries*, and *LCATS*.

And the Winners Are...

We got a good return on the surveys this year, coming from every corner of the US. We even got a response or two from Canada. With all the names, picking a brace of winners is a bit more random this year, and without further ado I dip my hand in my cap and pull out two names. . . **Nancy Slight-Gibney, University of Oregon**, and **Michelle Flinchbaugh, University of Maryland-Baltimore County**. Congratulations, **Nancy and Michelle**, you've won a subscription to *Against the Grain* and a paid registration to the **2003 Charleston Conference!**

Everyone else, there's always next year, and remember, you can't win if you don't send your survey in! 

Library Marketplace — Orientation for New Library Sales Reps

by **John Riley** (Sales Director, Eastern Book Company)
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My wife always hates it if I say that I am a traveling salesman. Sales Director, Sales Manager, Director of Marketing are all ok. Once upon a time we were known as Book Travelers or even Book Peddlers. In this era of euphemisms, where a dishwasher is jokingly referred to as a hydro-ceramic engineer, we all seek to elevate our titles, perhaps to compensate for our lack of sports entertainer salaries.

A few rules of the road for a new salesperson.

- 1) The big building in the middle of the campus is usually the library.
- 2) If you are late for an appointment, call ahead to re-schedule, even if it is a question of 15 minutes. Usually you will just meet 15 minutes later than scheduled. Librarians have tight schedules, just like you.
- 3) When you are late, slow down. You're already late.
 - a) You only get in accidents when you are in a hurry.
 - b) If the librarian is late for your appointment, you can always read. (There are way better magazines in the library than in a dentist's office.)
 - c) If the librarian forgets your meeting and you've driven 200 miles out of the way to get there . . . remember you're in a library, ergo: no screaming allowed/aloud.
- 4) A sales call is like a blind date . . . you never know what you will get.
- 5) Never make "cold calls." The very last time I tried one I walked in on a competitor who had a pre-arranged appointment . . . exit left . . . wipe egg from face.
- 6) Don't talk about **PromptCat** around the catalogers.



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